



BACKGROUND/HISTORY

Arizona, the 16th most populous state, has higher than national averages in the percentage of its adult population with some college but no degree, as well as in poverty rates and high school dropout rates.¹ A board of regents has provided management and control of the University of Arizona since its inception in 1864. Today the state's three public universities, the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, and Northern Arizona University are part of the Arizona University System (AUS) and governed by the Arizona Board of Regents. AUS institutions enroll more than 120,000 students.

The Arizona Legislature abolished the State Board of Directors for Community Colleges in 2003. Its void has been filled by the Arizona Community College Association, a loose confederation of the state's public two-year institutions that lacks any governing, coordinating, or regulatory authority.

Independent institutions in Arizona are represented by the Arizona State Board for Private Postsecondary Education. The University of Phoenix, a private for-profit institution operating campuses nationwide, is based in the state. Its parent company had \$2.3 billion in revenue in 2005, which made it one of the state's largest companies.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Measurement isn't sufficient for accountability, but it is necessary. Any legitimate effort to hold institutions accountable for success must begin with a fair, accurate process for gauging success. Higher education is multifaceted in design and mission—there are many different kinds of institutions serving diverse student groups while working to accomplish a large variety of goals. Accountability systems that don't examine all facets of an institution risk presenting a narrow, distorted view of success and creating unbalanced or even perverse incentives that are misaligned with institutional missions and larger policy goals.

Student Outcomes

Learning: Arizona does not publicly or systematically release accountability information on this measure.

Progression and Attainment: The Arizona Board of Regents reports the six-year graduation rate for the

ARIZONA SCORE CARD	
GATHERING INFORMATION	✓
Student Outcomes	−
Learning	−
Progression and Attainment	−
Further Employment, Education, and Life	−
Institutional Practices	✓
Teaching and Engagement	✓
Efficiency and Financial Stewardship	✓
Equity, Access, and Affordability	✓
Alignment With Pre K–12 Education	−
Scholarship and Research	✓
Economic and Community Development	−
Degree Production and Economic Impact	✓
Arts, Culture, and Service	−
Adult Education and Extension Services	−
Overall Quality of Information	✓
State- and Systemwide Information	✓
USING INFORMATION	−
Governance and Strategic Planning	✓
Funding	−
Transparency and Markets	−
− = Needs Improvement ✓ = In Progress + = Best Practice	

three state four-year postsecondary institutions, but does not report retention rates.


Further Employment, Education, and Life: Arizona does not publicly or systematically release accountability information on this measure.


Institutional Practices

Teaching and Engagement: Northern Arizona University (NAU), in its institution-specific accountability measures, tracks the percentage of lower-division student credit hours taught by tenured and tenure-eligible faculty and the percentage of students taking two or more primary classes taught by tenured


and tenure-track faculty. The data are presented from 2004–06 and include a goal for 2009. A similar measure tracks the percentage of graduating seniors who participated in a research-related or capstone experience. The University of Arizona tracks the percentage of graduates who participated in at least one form of engagement (research, presentations, volunteer work, internships, etc.).


NAU and Arizona State University, in their institution-specific accountability measures, report the percentage of graduating seniors who rate their overall experience as good or excellent. The data are presented for 2001–05 and given a target for 2007–08.

 **Efficiency and Financial Stewardship:** The Arizona Board of Regents issues an annual “Financial Ratio Analysis” that presents the evolution of 10 ratios over the last four years. These ratios include those that look at the ability of expendable net assets to keep pace with total expenses and the ability of unrestricted net assets to keep pace with total expenses. They also track debt service payments compared to total expenses. The ratios seek to address how well the state postsecondary institutions are prepared to handle an emergency or other unforeseen need.

 **Equity, Access, and Affordability:** The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) tracks financial aid (institutional aid, grants, and loans) by family income (\$0–19,999; \$20,000–34,999; \$35,000–49,999; \$50,000–64,999; \$65,000–79,999; \$80,000–119,999; and \$120,000 and above) and the average tuition, aid without loans, gift aid, and institutional aid by the same income categories.


The ABOR also tracks the number with financial need, the percentage of need met, and the average need-based and non-need based gifts. It reports the percentage of undergraduate students with debt and the average debt upon graduation. The three state institutions report the percentage of students earning and the total dollar amount spent on need- and merit-based aid. Only one of the three, Northern Arizona University, spends more each year on need-based aid than merit aid.

 **Alignment With Pre K–12 Education:** Arizona does not publicly or systematically release accountability information on this measure.


 **Scholarship and Research:** The Arizona Board of Regents issues annual reports on technology


transfers at its three public universities. Those reports track the number of invention disclosures, patent applications, received patents, licenses signed, and revenue generated. They trace the data back four years and separate performance by department or research unit, and also provide brief descriptions of some of the patents, contracts, and licenses.

Economic and Community Development


 **Degree Production and Economic Impact:** The Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) tracks total degrees awarded by level over a 10-year period.

Since 2001 ABOR has been distributing an extra .6 cent increase in the state sales tax that was approved as a voter referendum to the Technology and Research Initiative Fund. The fund has been a strong source of revenue; as of 2007, it had brought in over \$337 million in new money, or about \$70 million that year alone. The board supervises and reports on the usage of this revenue annually. The money is distributed directly to projects or services at one of the campuses, and the projects submit reviews for the annual reports. The reviews usually have a narrative portion in conjunction with past, current, and projected results on measures like return on investment (royalty income, value of new startups, value of new products, etc.), technology transfer (new software packages, business plans written, licenses or options signed, etc.), workforce contributions (undergraduates involved, post-doctoral appointments), collaborations, curriculum innovations, and economic development (companies identifying institution as a factor for location or expansion).


 **Arts, Culture, and Service:** Arizona does not publicly or systematically release accountability information on this measure.

 **Adult Education and Extension Services:** Arizona does not publicly or systematically release accountability information on this measure.


Overall Quality of Information

 The Arizona Board of Regents typically presents data by institution with a few years of historical context and a numeric target for the future. The data are relatively current (mostly from 2006 and 2007). They are not, however, disaggregated by important socioeconomic factors, compared to national averages or peer institutions, or inclusive of two-year institutions.


State- and Systemwide Information

 The Arizona Board of Regents “Accountability Measures” report does a good job pairing systemwide performance with institutional data, tailored according to each institution’s mission focus.


USING INFORMATION

 Simply making information available does not, in and of itself, constitute a well-functioning accountability system. Measurement is only step one; step two is making the information that comes from measurement meaningful. There are different ways to do this, but they’re all variations on a theme: injecting information about quality into existing processes that college decision-makers care about. These processes can be grouped into three areas: governance and strategic planning, funding, and transparency and markets.


Governance and Strategic Planning

 The Arizona Board of Regents “Accountability Measures” report addresses systemwide indices in addition to institution-specific ones. There are seven systemwide measures divided into three broad categories (access/participation, affordability, and student success). These measures include the percentage of Arizona high school graduates enrolling at an Arizona baccalaureate within four years after graduation, financial aid, average debt, total unmet need, and graduation rates. The institutions then report institution-specific measures such as the percentage of graduates completing their degree in five years or less (Arizona State), the percentage of students participating in a capstone or research experience (Northern Arizona), and the number of clients of a telephone health care service (University of Arizona). Each contains numeric goals for at least one year in the future.

Funding

 Arizona does not systematically tie higher education funding to institutional performance.

Transparency and Markets

 The student and parent sections of the Arizona Board of Regents’ Web site offers only some limited links to financial aid Web pages at the three state four-year postsecondary institutions, gross tuition and fee costs, and the admission standards. The Arizona

Commission for Postsecondary Education has an interactive tool to let users search by institution name, type, or location and program of study.

ACCOUNTABILITY DOCUMENTS

Arizona Board of Regents

FY 2007 Annual Report

http://www.abor.asu.edu/1_the_regents/reports_factbook/fb_files/2007%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%205-13-08.pdf

Regents Accountability Measures

http://www.abor.asu.edu/1_the_regents/meetings/board_book/Apr_2006/Item%2028.pdf

Arizona Board of Regents FY 2008–12 Five-Year Strategic Plan

http://www.abor.asu.edu/1_the_regents/reports_factbook/planning/ABOR-Approved-Five-Year-Strategic-Plan.pdf

Student Financial Aid Report FY 2007

http://www.abor.asu.edu/1_the_regents/reports_factbook/fb_files/FY2007-Financial-Aid-Report.pdf

FY 2007 Financial Ratio Analysis

http://www.abor.asu.edu/1_the_regents/reports_factbook/fb_files/FY%202007%20FINANCIAL%20RATIO%20ANALYSIS%20FINAL.pdf

Technology and Research Initiative Fund (TRIF) Annual Report

http://www.abor.asu.edu/1_the_regents/TRIF/FINAL%20WEB%20TRIF%20090107.pdf

FY 2007 University Technology Transfer Reports

http://www.abor.asu.edu/1_the_regents/reports_factbook/technology/Item-10-2007-12-Tech-Transfer-Reports.pdf

Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education

Annual Report 2007

http://www.abor.asu.edu/1_the_regents/reports_factbook/fb_files/FY%202007%20FINANCIAL%20RATIO%20ANALYSIS%20FINAL.pdf

Arizona Governor’s P–20 Council

Governor’s P–20 Council Education Recommendations and Work Plans

<http://www.azgovernor.gov/P20/documents/P20CouncilRecomm.pdf>

Higher Education Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations

<http://www.governor.state.az.us/p20/documents/P20HEDRecomm.pdf>

ENDNOTES

¹ “Almanac Issue 2008–9.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Volume 55, Issue 1.

